Gender based discriminatory Human Resource Practices: An identification of the Etiological factors.

Sayma Zia
Assistant Professor
Bahria University

Abstract

Purpose: The main purpose of this article is to broaden the domain of gender related problems and to examine the etiological factors that are basically responsible for gender discrimination. It is an existing issue in the corporate world because of the increasing ratio of women to men across the globe, so it is extremely important to highlight this very issue, and must be addressed as it indirectly affects the economy.

Design/methodology/approach: It is a cross sectional survey in which inductive type of qualitative research is conducted in order to gain an understanding of each gender insight and actual feelings of each gender by the direct interaction of researcher and subject. In-depth interviews focus groups and observation technique in the naturalistic environment is conducted.

Findings: According to the conceptual framework, gender discrimination is actually because of the main latent variable "culture". Culture leads to some of the other variables like perceptions, family oriented approach, family background and personality traits.

Practical implications: This paper is of great use for HR practitioners since discrimination in any case decrease the efficiency level of employees and in turn decreases the overall productivity. HRD can design such policies that would help them to decrease the cultural impact in organization.

Social Implications: This paper is highly useful for social welfare since it would help to save human rights.

Limitations: This study is limited to service sector organizations.

Originality/value: The value of this paper is to HR practitioners who make HR policies and implementers as well.

Keywords: Gender, discrimination, culture, Human resource management.

Paper type: Research paper

1.   Introduction:

Employees in organizations are facing lots of problems just because of the inability of HRM to handle these issues. Gender biases still exist in 20th century although lots of work in the research field has been done on this very issue. Over the past half century or so, scholars have been provided essential insight into the issues of work place justice. To date, gender discrimination literatures have largely run parallel to each other some of them are related to purely gender discrimination, work place justice, women leadership, behavioral ethics, glass ceiling, pay gaps of employees, etc. Many of the literature

addressing these issues are from different perspective and paradigms. Case studies of different cultures are also being studied by scholars. Organizations have tended to study how female employees are judged by employers and how they themselves feel about these issues and vice versa. Furthermore, what will be the impact on the level of performance and mental health of employees at work? As far as behavioral ethics are, concerned it varies from individual to individual and the intensity of the problem. Regarding work place issues specifically for women are discussed by scholars comprehensively but not yet resolved.

This structure of this study is as follows: First part is introduction which consists of background, importance, concurrent relevance, scope, and the research questions. Second part is literature review. Third part is methodology used for the study which consists of research methods used, theoretical/conceptual framework used, variables studied, research design, sampling design, sample size, instruments of data collection, and methods used for data collection. Fourth part is findings. Fifth part comprised of analysis whereas sixth part is conclusion and seventh part is policy recommendations and future directions.

1.1.   Background:

As over the past centuries the women has been neglected continuously or women has been treated with biasness specially in terms of organizational justice, behavioral ethics, glass ceiling effects, and pay gaps. Given this context, scholars always feel that this special issue should be addressed or given importance across the globe.

1.2.   Importance:

This topic is extremely important in order to increase the productivity of not only female employees, but also male ones. By exploring gender discrimination in any aspect the problem of employee motivation workplace justice, behavioral ethics, pay gaps, glass ceiling, etc would be resolved to some extent. If organizations start doing employee branding, then many issues might be resolved automatically, because once organizations start doing employee branding they will start owing their employees. As the culture in most of the organizations is masculine so the importance of feminine employees is negligible. Mostly female employees are given less importance than males, so this study will be helpful in exploring the reasons behind this fact and how these issues could be addressed in a justified manner.

1.3.   Concurrent Relevance:

By and by the time this problem has become more severe because if we examine the trends of the population across the globe the ratio of women to men is increasing or it might be possible that after a decade or two, it will increase more, so it should be taken seriously to resolve this problem on the basis of equality because now women is more inclined towards career progression.

1.4.   Scope:

This study is applicable to nearly all the organizations (multinational & national) because gender discrimination is still a hot issue across the globe, so it could be generalized for every service sector organization.

The research will be helpful for:

a. The organizations to increase their productivity.
b. To protect human rights.
c. Stress management of employees (Men and Women) through equitable justice
d. For employee satisfaction and loyalty.

1.5. Research Questions:

a. What is the role of HRM policies & practices regarding gender discrimination?
b. How can *interactional justice* concepts help us to understand the ethical phenomenon at workplace?
c. Pay gaps are due to gender differences or these are due to some other reasons?

2.   Literature Review:

'A discussion has circulated around the gender pay gap, which is also known as the "gender wage gap", the "gender gap in earnings" or "male-female income disparity", and which commonly refers to the difference in average hourly earnings of male and female employees after controlling for human capital factors such as education, tenure, etc.' (adapted from various papers of Blau and Kahn (2006, pp.45-66)). 'The topic of the gender pay gap has attracted a diverse set of literature, including economy'. (Groshen, 1991; Blau and Kahn, (2006), sociology (Hannan et al., 1990), psychology (Stroh et al., 1992) and human resource management (Heneman, 1985).

Greenberg (1986) was one of the first authors to apply organizational justice theory to performance evaluation. 'Organizational justice may be defined as the study of fairness at work' (Bryne and Cropanzano, 2001,pp.89-118). 'Furthermore, Greenberg (1990) explains that the term organizational justice implies that fairness is being considered in the organization. According to literature, human beings are specifically interested in three kinds of justice. The first one is ***distributive justice***, which deals not only with the perceived fairness of the outcomes or allocations that individuals in organizations receive (Folger and Cropanzano, 1998), but also with "what the decisions are" at the end of the appraisal process, or the "content of fairness" (Tang and Sarsfield-Baldwin, 1996). Erdogan (2002) contends that ratees compare their efforts with the PA rating they receive and the fairness of the rating establishes distributive justice perceptions in PA. Some studies found that employees expect ratings above average in relation to others (Bartol et al., 2001). Subsequent to the previously mentioned is the second kind of justice, ***procedural justice***, which refers to the fairness of the procedures used to

decide outcomes and addresses fairness issues regarding methods, mechanisms, and processes used to determine those outcomes (Folger and Cropanzano, 1998).

Procedural justice is related to the means used to achieve the ends (how decisions are made), or the process of fairness (Tang and Sarsfield-Baldwin, 1996). Finally, the third kind of justice is ***interactional justice***, which clearly establishes that people care about the fairness of the interpersonal treatment and communication that they receive (Ambrose, 2002; Bies, 2001).

It is important to mention that interactional justice focuses on how formal agents of the organization treat those who are subject to their authority, decisions and actions.'(Cobb et al., 1995,pp.243-295).

'The existence of the gender pay gap almost all over the world has generated the need to better understand various factors contributing to it (Blau andKahn, 2006; Rubery et al.,2005).

Auster (1989) has grouped the main explanations of the gender pay gap into two main categories: macro level, where women are seen as a homogeneous group, and micro level, which concentrates on psychological approaches viewing women as a heterogeneous diverse group. At the macro level, the focus is on economic theories, which provide explanations of the phenomenon based on such factors as differences in education, work experience, the amount of starting salary as well as general explanations such as different types of discrimination (Keaveny et al., 2007; Grybaite, 2006;Mitra, 2002). Micro level explanations of the gender pay gap include such personal factors as individual preferences and forces, which change values and attitudes towards working conditions and compensation practices (Giapponi and McEvoy, 2006; Bren and Garcia-Penalosa, 2002; Hakim, 2000).On the one hand, although there is considerable evidence of the gender pay gap, study after study demonstrates that many individuals do not perceive the gender pay gap'. (Lange, 2008; Blackaby et al., 2005).

'Khoreva (2011,pp 233-248) in his conceptual paper adopted different theories for identifying the factors that cause Individual perceptions of the gender pay gap. Furthermore, in this paper some factors had also been highlighted that intense or weakens the gender pay gap.' (Khoreva,2011,pp.327-346)

'We argue here that the influence of gender culture on women's advancement in organizations is particularly significant. Therefore, further attention must be paid to identifying and changing the underlying gender cultures of organizations, rather than the proliferation of policies that encourage assimilation to the masculine norm. The concepts of gender culture and gender subtext are particularly useful for stripping back the facade of commitment to gender equity that organizations such as Townbank are allowed to perpetuate without having to undergo any meaningful change. These concepts should be applied to additional empirical studies to examine the more subtle forms of gendering that seemingly undermine gender equity efforts. The concept of gender identity was especially useful in

understanding how women navigate their career trajectories, has also highlight that women managers are still experiencing a high degree of pressure to accept and conform to masculine norms and behaviors, and those who do so, wittingly or unwittingly contribute to the maintenance of the cultural processes that produce and reproduce gender distinctions. The resulting tensions between their subjective identities as women and the projected masculine identities they feel they need to adopt, gives rise to what Poggio's (2000) terms "ambivalences and inconsistencies" in women's experiences with gender culture, such ambiguities that appear to be irreconcilable for many and may well explain the high attrition rate of women managers at organizations like Townbank.'(North-Samardzic&Taksa, 2011, 196-216)

3.   Methodology:

3.1.   Research Methods used:

It is a cross sectional survey in which inductive type of qualitative research is conducted in order to gain an understanding of each gender insight and actual feelings of each gender by the direct interaction of researcher and subject.

3.2.   Theoretical / conceptual framework used:

Figure 1
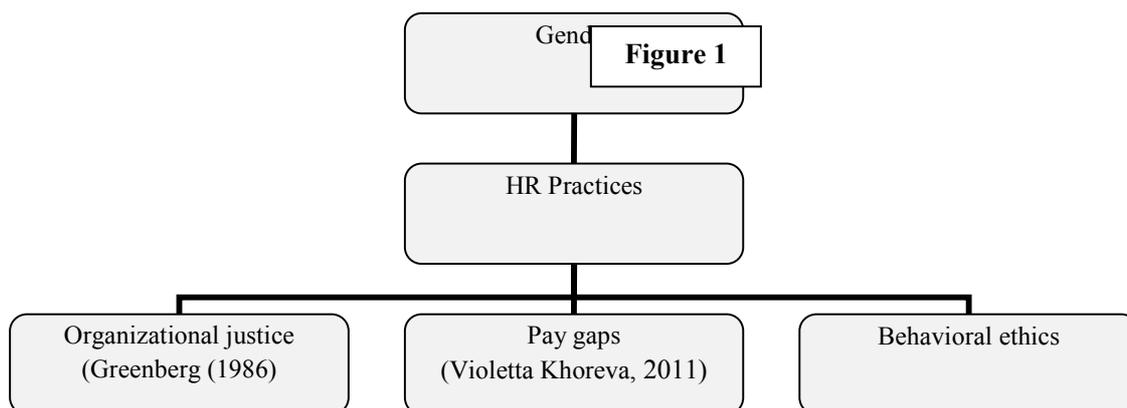
3.3.   Variables studied:

Independent Variable: Gender
Dependent Variable: Organizational Justice, Behavioral ethics, Pay gaps

3.4.   Research design:

It is an exploratory study which follows qualitative paradigm. The data has been collected from service sectors. Grounded theory techniques, focus group, observation & brief interviews have been conducted to find out the ground realities.

3.5.   Sampling design:

Sampling design: Convenience and purposive sampling techniques are used.

3.6.   Sample Size

• 20 Employees of managerial level (10 Men & 10 Women).Men & Women were the part of study in order to avoid biasness & for digging out the actual perceptions of men regarding gender discrimination.

• 6-10 Employees of Managerial level were participated in the focus groups.

3.7.   Instruments of Data Collection:

✓   In-depth interviews have been conducted followed by semi structured or open-ended questions.

✓   Focus group interviews were also conducted.

3.8.   Methods used for data collection:

3.81.   Interviews:

Qualitative in-depth interview technique has been used for grounded theory technique for collecting data.

3.82.   Focus group:

Focus groups of 6-10 employees were conducted to collect data. Each session lasts between   1 to 3 hours for exploring ideas and obtaining in-depth information about how people think about this issue.

3.83.   Observation:

Observations technique in the naturalistic environment as complete observant as well as participant has been used.

4.   **Findings:**

Figure 2
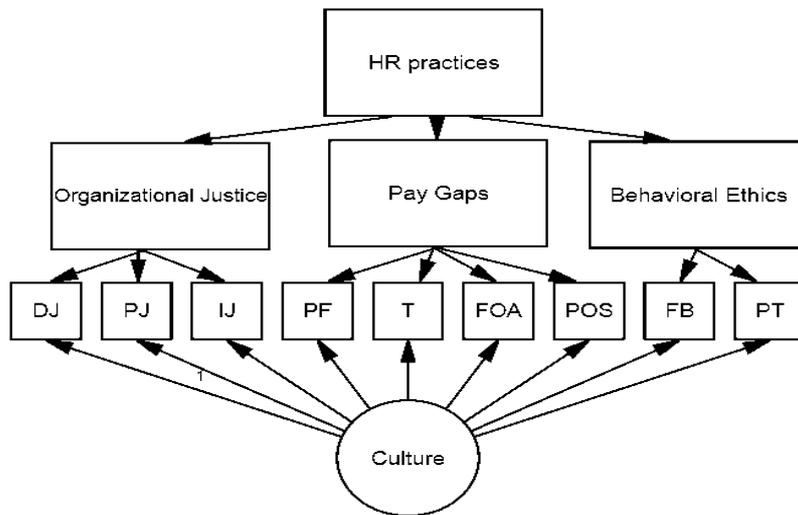
DJ= Distributive Justice
PJ= Procedural Justice
IJ= Interactional Justice
PF= Physical Factors
T= Timings
FOA= Family Oriented Approach
POS= Perceptions of Supervisors
FB= Family Background
PT= Personality Traits

5.   Analysis:

As shown in figure 2 gender related HR practices can be analyzed by organizational justice, pay gaps & behavioral ethics. Several questions were asked by the interviewees & discussed in focus groups in order to dig out the factors that lead to discrimination. Questions were discussed by the interviewees one by one to reveal the root cause and in the same sequence it is presented in the article. The questions along with the responses are as follows:

a. *What is the role of HRM policies & practices regarding gender discrimination?*

When this question was asked by the male interviewees they replied that as far as HR policies are   concerned no HR policy leads to discrimination, but when we look up the HR practices that have been followed by HR practitioners the answers were quite different, but had the same direction. Since practices can only tell us about justice so the answers varied. Some of the male respondents answered that while female employees are not able to contribute fully because of cultural constraints so the distribution of reward is accordingly. When they have been asked about procedural justice practice the

answers were same. The answers were amazingly surprising about interactional justice practices that since females are more family oriented and they are not able to give quality time and if they have a problem in their families then it is not possible for them to maintain good interactions with their colleagues or supervisors.

When the same question was asked by the female interviewees the answers were more or less same although they complained a lot about procedural, interactional and distributive justice, but when they have been asked about the family oriented approach they replied that because of cultural constraints they are not able to stay back for long hours but their productivity level is higher and they give quality time. However, HR practitioners at least in Pakistan follow the old traditional practices rather than measuring the productivity levels they usually count the working hours.

Since two focus group interviews were conducted one from males and the other from females, the responses also lead to the conclusion that because of the cultural constraints it is quite difficult to maintain organizational justice in organizations.

b. *How can interactional justice concepts help us to understand ethical phenomenon at workplace?*

When this question was asked by the male interviewees they answered that maintenance of interactional justice definitely leads to ethical problems. Most of the males were complaining that some of the females are very good in interactions rather than concentrating on their work and these issues leads towards interactional justice problems. It also creates stress and frustrations for other employees that definitely leads towards unethical practices of other employees. Some of them also replied that because of traditional concepts females also take undue advantage. Some of them also highlighted the family backgrounds of the supervisors and also the personality traits they possess contribute towards ethical phenomenon they follow at their workplace. Some of the interviewees also highlighted the fact that interactional justice is directly related to behavioral ethics which is again dependent on personality traits and largely on family background. Since personality traits are largely dependent on nature and nurture so the behavior shown at the workplace is the reflection of family background.

When this question has been asked by the females they answered that definitely interactional justice problem contributes to ethical phenomenon. But it has nothing to do with the gender those who are believers of machiavellianism are more successful in organizations.

Focus groups response were that now it has become the culture of our organization that nobody even think about interactional justice and definitely if it is not there, it would lead towards many unethical issues. In focus group interviews the interviewees were of the opinion that behavioral issues are responsible for the interactional justice and the training for interaction starts from the cradle so only HR is not responsible for this very issue but the whole process of developing ones personality is involved in the overall process.

c. Pay gaps are due to gender differences or these are due to some other reasons?

When this question was asked by the male interviewees they highlighted that pay gaps are just due to the physical constraints, stress handling issues with females, timing issues. They were of the opinion that females are not able to do everything because they are not strong physically so not able to handle stressful situations furthermore, not able to stay back late so they are getting less pays as compared to men. Some of them also highlighted that because of the family oriented approach of females in our culture they are getting less pay.

When the same question has been asked by the female interviewees they replied that they are doing at their level best but not denying to the cultural constraints they further added that although they have lots of other family responsibility as well but still they do not compromise on work efficiency.

Focus groups had almost of the same views as individual interviews, but some of the views were different that females who are working in organizations which are more female concentrated are quite satisfied with the pay gaps since they have accepted the cultural constraints but organizations which are not female concentrated perceive more pay gaps as they compare their work and pay with their male colleagues as proposed by Violetta, 2011 is proved in Pakistani culture as well.

6.   Conclusion:

The conclusion of this survey is that some of the HR practices lead to gender discrimination as organizational justice, pay gaps and behavioral ethics are the factors that give birth to discriminatory practices in organizations, but there are some latent factors behind these that have been highlighted by in-depth discussion. The key factor that has been observed is culture. Culture is the important latent variable that shows the way to some believes which are responsible for discriminatory practices.

7.   Policy Recommendations & Future directions:

It is recommended to all HR practitioners to develop such policies that help to eliminate the destructive effects of discrimination and craft a transparent, healthy and productive environment. Empirical work can be done by future researchers. Future researcher can also find out the relationship between human development index and gender inequality index. It is highly recommended to the HR practitioners to look for quality not for quantity.

References:

Ambrose, M.L., 2002.Contemporary justice research: a new look at familiar questions. *Organizational Behavior & Human Decision Processes*, 89 (1), pp. 803-812.
 Auster, E.,1989.Task characteristics as a bridge between macro- and micro level research on salary inequality between men and women .*The Academy of Management Review*, 14 (2),pp.93-173.

Bartol, K.M., Smith, R.H., Durham, C.C. and Poon, J.M.L.,2001. Influence of performance evaluation rating segmentation on motivation and fairness perceptions. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 86 (6), pp.1106-1119.

Bies, R.J. (2001).Interactional in(justice): the sacred and the profane, in Greenberg, J. and Cropanzano, R. (Eds), Advances in Organizational Justice, Stanford University Press,Stanford, CA, pp. 89-118.

Blackaby, D., Booth, A. and Frank, J. 2005.Outside offers and the gender pay gap: empirical evidence from the UK academic labour market. *Economic Journal*, 115 (501),pp. 81-107.

Blau, F. and Kahn, L.2006.The US gender pay gap in the 1990s: slowing convergence. *Industrial & Labor Relations Review*, 60 (1), pp. 45-66.

Bren, R. and Garsia-Penalosa, C.2002. Learning and gender segregation. *Journal of Labor Economics*, 20 (4), pp. 899-922.

Byrne, Z.S. and Cropanzano, R.2001.The history of organizational justice: the founders Speak, in Cropanzano,.*Justice in the Workplace: From Theory to practice, Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Mahwah, NJ*, R. (Ed.).pp. 3-26.

Cobb, A.T., Wooten, K.C. and Folger, R. 1995.Justice in the making: toward understanding the theory and practice of justice in organizational change and development, in Pasmore,W.A. and Woodman, R.W. (Eds), Research in Organizational Change and Development, JAI.Press, Greenwich, CT,8,pp.243-295.

Erdogan, B.2002.Antecedents and consequences of justice perceptions in performance Appraisals. *Human Resource Management Review*,12 (4), pp. 555-578.

Folger, R. and Cropanzano, R.S.1998, Organizational Justice and Human Resource Management, Sage, Thousand Oaks, CA.

Giapponi, C. and McEvoy, S.2006.The legal, ethical, and strategic implications of gender discrimination in compensation: can the fair pay act succeed where the equal pay act has failed. *Journal of Individual Employment Rights*,12 (2), pp. 137-150.

Greenberg, J. (1986).Determinants of perceived fairness in performance evaluation.*Journal of Applied Psychology*,71(3), p.340.

Greenberg, J.1990.Organizational justice: yesterday, today, tomorrow. *Journal of Management,* 16 (2), pp. 399-432.

Groshen, E.1991.The structure of the female/male wage differential. *Journal of Human Resources*, 26, pp. 457-472.

Grybaite, V.2006.Analysis of theoretical approaches to gender pay gap. *Journal of Business Economics and Management*,7(2), pp. 85-91.

Hakim, C. 2000. Work-lifestyle Choices in the 21st Century: Preference Theory, Oxford University Press, Oxford.

Hannan, M., Schomann, K. and Blossfeld, H.-P.1990.Sex and sector differences in the dynamics of wage growth in the Federal Republic of Germany. *American Sociological Review*, 55, pp. 694-713.

Heneman, H.1985.Pay satisfaction, in Rowland, K.M. and Ferris. *Research in Personnel and Human Resources Management*, 3, JAJ Press, Greenwich, CT, G.R. (Eds), pp. 115-139

Keaveny, T., Inderrieden, E. and Toumanoff, P. (2007). "Gender differences in pay of young management professionals in the United States: a comprehensive view". *Journal of Labor Research*, 28 (2), pp. 327-346.

Khoreva ,Violetta.2011. Gender pay gap and its perceptions. *Equality Diversity and Inclusion: An International Journal* 30 (3), pp. 233-248

Lange, T. 2008.Communist legacies, gender and the impact on job satisfaction in Central and Eastern Europe. *European Journal of Industrial Relations*, 14 (3), pp. 327-346.

Mitra, A. 2002.Mathematics skill and male-female wages. *Journal of Socio-Economics*, 31, pp. 356-443.

North-Samardzic,Andrea & Taksa,Lucy.,2011.The impact of gender culture on women's career trajectories: An Australian case study.*Equality Diversity and Inclusion: An International Journal*.30 (3), pp. 196-216

Palaiologos ,Anastasios, Papazekos ,Panagiotis & Panayotopoulou,Leda.,2011.Organizational justice and employee satisfaction in performance appraisal. *Journal of European Industrial Training.* 35 (8), pp. 826-840

Rubery, J., Grimshaw, D. and Figueiredo, H.2005.How to close the gender pay gap in Europe: towards the gender mainstreaming of pay policy. *Industrial Relations Journal,*36(3),pp184-213.

Stroh, L., Brett, J. and Reilly, A.1992.All the right stuff: a comparison of female and male managers' career progression. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 77, pp. 60-251.

Tang, T.L.P. and Sarsfield-Baldwin, L.J.1996.Distributive and procedural justice as related to satisfaction and commitment. *Advanced Management Journal*, 61 (3), pp. 25-31.